







Indiana Birth-Age 5 Literacy Framework

ASSESSMENT

	 Goals	 Instruction	 Assessment	 Leadership	 Professional Development	 Commitment
 Early Care and Education Environments						
 Transition to Kindergarten						
 State Leadership						

Guiding Principle:

A systematic assessment approach is used to collect multiple forms and types of data about children's language and literacy growth.

- ☑ A clearly defined purpose exists for assessing all children.
- ☑ Assessment procedures and content are age-appropriate.
- ☑ Multiple approaches are used to assess children's literacy learning including formative and summative measures that are reliable, valid, and fair for the purpose intended.
- ☑ Differentiated professional development provides opportunities for teachers/caregivers to deepen their understanding and use of data for instructional decision-making.
- ☑ Teachers/caregivers have the knowledge, skill, and competence to effectively communicate with families about assessment.
- ☑ Families are part of the assessment process, including providing input to teachers/caregivers and sharing of results.

Language and Literacy Assessment

Assessment allows teachers and parents to see how a child is progressing and helps teachers to prepare instruction appropriate for their students' ever-changing language development and literacy needs. (Enz & Morrow, 2009, p. 2)

All teachers/caregivers strive to create the optimal learning environment for all children entrusted to them. An essential part of doing this is to use assessments to gain insight into children's interests, knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Assessment is best defined as involving "the multiple steps of collecting data on a child's development and learning, determining its significance in light of the program goals and objectives, incorporating the information into planning for individuals and programs, and communicating the findings to parents and other involved parties" (Hills, 1992, p. 43).

The principles and philosophies that are applied to the assessment of young children are part of a continuum that begins at birth and extends through age six into elementary school. Assessment of skills learned by young children must align to expected developmental milestones and then change, as appropriate, to support children as they grow and develop. All children learn by doing, but infants and toddlers exhibit this through their actions rather than through language or writing. Children's growth is more rapid and uneven from birth to preschool than at any other period of development so it becomes difficult and challenging to capture children's skills and abilities, particularly if it must be done at a singular point in time (Zaslow, Calkins, & Halle, 2000).

Generally, teachers/caregivers individually assess all domains of development to ensure that each child attains appropriate milestones and that the curriculum is serving the child's learning needs. It is also critical to examine children's developing early language and literacy skills. Research has consistently demonstrated that deficits in language and literacy skills are associated with learning difficulties in the elementary years (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). By assessing language and literacy in the preschool years, issues and challenges can be addressed to ensure children have all the foundational skills necessary for school success.

Assessment has tremendous value for both the teacher/caregiver and the family. First, information from assessments allows teachers/caregivers to provide an optimal learning environment for all children. Assessment data can provide information about children's interests and learning that teachers/caregivers can use to plan lessons and experiences that target children's curiosity and abilities, particularly as these opportunities relate to language and literacy. Using assessment affords teachers/caregivers a greater understanding of individual learning needs and how to best differentiate instruction. Second, assessments inform teachers/caregivers of children's progress toward meeting the language and literacy goals that are critical for school success. Third, assessment enables early detection of learning differences and/or disabilities. Instruction must be differentiated so all children benefit. **One size does not fit all.** Children use all of their senses to learn, but may have preferred modalities. Furthermore, children who struggle in the elementary years may have an

undiagnosed learning disability and through early childhood assessments, this disability may be detected and addressed. Finally, assessment often enlightens families and they gain insight into their children's abilities, interests, and developmental level. Families are able to use this information to make important educational decisions for their children.

The principles and purposes for assessment are similar whether assessment addresses children's overall development or a specific learning domain such as language and literacy. Throughout this chapter, assessment procedures and instruments are discussed through the lens of language and literacy development. When language and literacy development, concepts, and skills are assessed and the findings are used to inform instruction, children benefit.

Assessment Guidelines and Purposes

Recommended practices in assessment for young children are guided by specific professional standards and position statements established by national organizations, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Association for Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE), the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children; the National Association of School Psychologists, the Head Start Program Performance Standards (2006); and the National Education Goals Panel (1998) . The following guidelines inform decisions when planning assessment for children from birth to Age 5:

- Assessment data are used to understand and improve learning.
- Data collection is ongoing and authentic, occurring within the child's daily contexts, including interactions with materials, adults, and other children.
- Assessment instruments are used appropriately, for the purpose specified.
- Assessments are based on scientific research, child development, early learning standards, and curriculum goals for all domains of learning (social, emotional, language, cognitive, and physical).

- Assessments are age-appropriate in both content and the method of data collection.
- Assessments should be linguistically appropriate, recognizing that to some extent all assessments are measures of language.
- Staff and families are knowledgeable about the assessments administered and the data collection techniques.
- Families are a valued source for assessment information and are provided suggestions for working with their children based on the findings.

These guidelines support appropriate assessment practices and ensure accurate and reliable data collection. Through appropriate assessment practices, a teacher or caregiver gains insight about children's interests and development. This information assists teachers as they plan lessons and organize their classrooms to provide rich learning environments for children.

Snow and Van Hammel (2008) state that the key dimensions for decisions about assessment are condensed into three basic questions of *Why? What? and How?*. In essence: *Why are we assessing? What are we assessing? and How do we conduct the assessments?* Recently, Snow and Oh (2011) added the fourth question "*Who is being assessed?*" The answer to this question enables teachers to make an appropriate match between the assessment instrument and the characteristics of the population being assessed. For example, assessment decisions will vary if children are monolingual versus bilingual or if children are 2 years of age versus 4 years of age.

Teaching and learning are reciprocal processes, each influencing the other. Only through assessment is a teacher able to determine if children are learning and, in turn, whether changes are needed to improve teaching and learning. (Roberts, Kellough, & Moore, 2005). The first step is to clearly understand the purposes for assessment and to select an assessment instrument that is appropriate for the children who will be assessed. Data results provide information about the progress of children's learning, as well as the effectiveness of instruction. Thus, the findings are dependent on the

selection of the assessment instrument. The table below provides a list of purposes and questions to assist teachers in selecting appropriate assessment tools.

TABLE 1: *Language and Literacy Assessment Purposes and Clarifying Questions*

Purpose	Questions
Planning for Instruction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the child's strengths, needs, and learning processes? 2. What are the child's interests? 3. What are the skill levels of children in language? In literacy? 4. How can instruction be responsive and appropriate to each child's abilities? 5. Are developmental milestones being met, and if not, what can be adapted in the curriculum? 6. What gaps exist between the child and the curriculum? What can be modified to minimize this gap?
Reflecting on teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How well is classroom instruction working? 2. How can I improve my instructional practice?
Identifying children with special needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is needed for the program to meet the child's needs? 2. Is further intervention necessary?
Communicating with families	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do families understand the assessment procedures? 2. Do families understand the assessment results? 3. Do families know what to do at home to support their children's language development and literacy learning? 4. Do families contribute information about their child's home learning experience?

Table 1

Source: (Hills, 1992)

Methods of Assessment

An assessment system or plan for obtaining data about children's learning styles, abilities, and interests involve a multi-source approach. An assessment system may

include the following: (1) ongoing observations of children that use checklists and anecdotal records, (2) student work samples and portfolios, and (3) formal assessment measures that may be part of the literacy program.

Observation assessment must be authentic, occurring during daily learning experiences, play activities, and care routines to record and describe the development and learning of children. Children are rapidly changing and growing and by engaging in authentic, observational assessments, it is easier for the teacher or caregiver to monitor and improve children's learning, as well as their own teaching. The observations provide immediate feedback about the child's development and literacy progress which then informs the teacher or caregiver about how to adapt the curriculum and instruction to meet the child's needs. Further, by noticing differences in children's abilities, teachers or caregivers can engage in differentiated instruction to target and scaffold each child's learning. Student **work samples** also provide ongoing evidence of learning progress and development. Teachers collect sample of children's drawings and other work which is dated and placed in a folder or portfolio. Learning growth is evident when the collected materials are reviewed by teachers/caregivers and families. Observation data and work samples are types of **formative assessment**. This is the most common assessment for young children.

Formative assessments document children's individual growth and development, focusing on the individual child. The defining characteristic of effective formative assessment is its interactive or cyclical nature (Sadler, 1988; Wright, 2009).

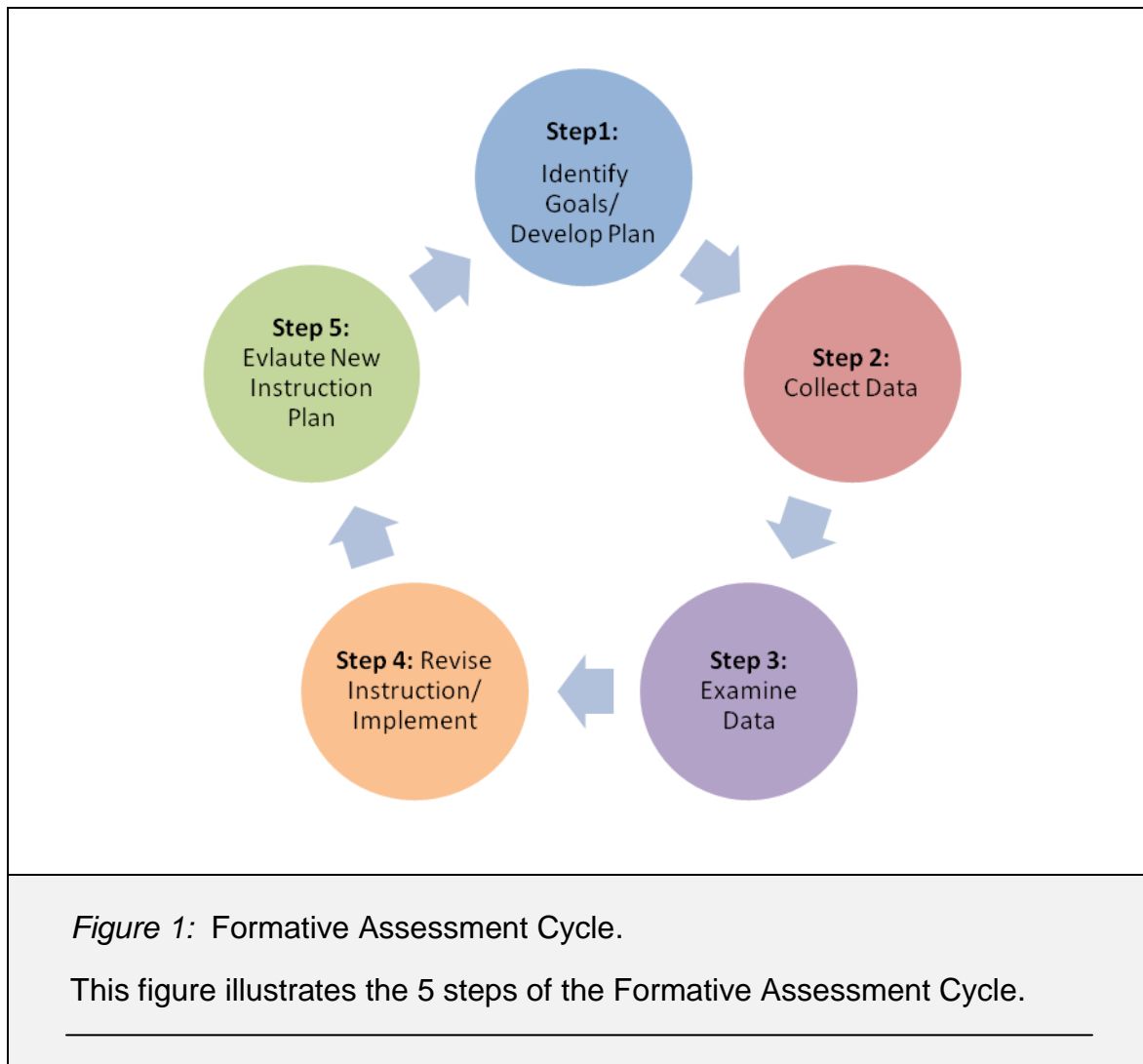


Key term:

Formative Assessment:
Ongoing assessment that informs instruction.

Assessment should not be a single occurrence, but an ongoing process. The Indiana *Early Childhood ISTAR-KR Assessment Handbook* (2010) states that assessment "is the process of gathering information from several sources of evidence, organizing the evidence, and finally interpreting the evidence, using it to inform instruction and monitor child progress" (page 17). This process should repeat itself as teachers and caregivers work with children.

Based loosely on Jones' (2003) 5-stage literacy documentation cycle, each step describes a process where the teacher collects and examines data. Teachers or caregivers follow the cycle of data collection to continually monitor children's learning. Each step in the cycle is part of a system where assessment is integral to the teaching and learning process (Jones, 2003; Indiana DOE, 2010). The steps of a Formative Assessment Cycle are depicted in Figure 1 below.



Step 1: Identify Goals

The teacher or caregiver, working with the school principal or facility director, clarifies the purpose of the assessment, determines which goals are being targeted, and identifies the evidence of learning.

- What evidence of learning will indicate that children have mastered the learning goals?

Step 2: Collect Data

This step includes planning and collecting multiple sources of data, including observations, checklists, audio and videotapes, portfolios, records of children's conversations and drawings, and other informal techniques.

Step 3: Examine Data

A thorough and reflective examination of the data by the teacher or caregiver, as well as the school principal or center director, is scheduled to determine each child's strengths and challenges and to establish if progress is being made toward the identified learning goals. Teachers and caregivers might ask themselves the following questions:

- "Is my instructional practice working for all children?"
- "What instructional changes do I need to make or what other learning opportunities can I develop so every child meets his/her learning goals?"

Step 4: Revise Instruction/Implement

This important step is where adaptations are made to the curriculum and then implemented based on the findings from the data.

Step 5: Evaluate new instruction plan

The teacher or caregiver determines if the adaptations made to the curriculum resulted in learning success and if other modifications need to be made. The cycle then repeats itself.

One aspect of formative assessment is **progress monitoring**, which is the measure of children's progress toward meeting a particular goal. Progress monitoring can vary in frequency depending on the learning growth of individual children. Teachers may ask: "Is this child making adequate progress toward the goal(s) or is the child in need of more intervention to achieve age-appropriate outcomes in language and literacy?" If children are at high-risk and are achieving below learning expectations,

progress monitoring should occur weekly to every two weeks. Table 2, below, outlines a progress monitoring schedule similar to that found in the *Indiana Reading Framework* (2011).

TABLE 2: *Progress Monitoring Schedule*

Level of Need/Risk	Skill Level	Frequency of Progress Monitoring
Low Risk	Meeting or exceeding age-level goals	Several times a year
Moderate Risk	Somewhat below age-level expectations	Once to two times per month
High Risk	Well below age-level expectations	Once a week or every two weeks

Table 2

Source: (IDOE, 2011)

Summative assessments, on the other hand, are often formal instruments that provide a *snapshot* of what a child knows and is able to do. These assessments are typically administered once or twice a year. Both types of assessments, formative and summative, are necessary to provide teachers/caregivers, principals/center directors, and families with the evidence needed to determine if children are learning and making appropriate progress. Summative assessments usually measure progress against typical development; measuring specific learning goals, such as literacy or math skills. Summative assessments provide information about a child's achievement of these goals and may support findings from formative assessments. The methods and purposes for each type of assessment are distinct, but ultimately they should be used as part of an integrated



Key term:

Summative Assessment:
An indicator of what children have learned over time -- usually at the end of the year.

program that includes an assessment system, standards-aligned curriculum, and evidence-based instruction (Johnson & Jenkins, 2009).

Whereas formative assessments inform curriculum and instruction, summative assessments determine if the learning outcomes of children have been met. This type of assessment summarizes the learning after instruction and is often labeled as “high stakes testing” (American Educational Research Association, 2000). Two types of summative assessment are:

1. Criterion-referenced: instruments that test a child’s mastery toward a particular content or pre-set benchmark.
2. Norm-Referenced: instruments that are designed to compare one group of students against another and are administered, scored, and interpreted in a standard manner (standardized).

Enz and Morrow (2009) discuss concerns associated with standardized testing as it relates to language and literacy development. The content of these tests often do not assess emergent literacy skills, such as oral language or prior knowledge. Teachers/caregivers, principals and center directors must carefully review standardized tests before administering these assessments to young children to determine if they are developmentally appropriate and if they will provide the data needed to assess children’s progress, instructional effectiveness, or program outcomes.

Developing an Assessment Plan

School leaders and teachers, as well as center directors and caregivers should design a systematic plan to determine children’s progress that includes multiple measures of assessment. A written plan will provide clear expectations and procedures for assessing language and literacy skill development.

Prior to developing an Assessment Plan, it is useful to perform an **assessment audit** to identify what



Key term:

Assessment Audit refers to an evaluation of present data collection procedures and how the results are used to inform instructional practice.

is currently being used to assess children's learning. Through this audit, instructional leaders can determine if the assessments match the purpose or goals of the curriculum; if any assessments currently being used are unnecessary or redundant; and if the assessments meet the learning needs of the children in the program. In the end, the audit will help develop a focused and streamlined assessment plan.

Teachers/caregivers, with the support of leadership, need to design a plan that matches the goals of the Birth to Age 5 program (see the *Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Report for Kindergarten Readiness (ISTAR-KR) Handbook* (IDOE, 2010) for state early childhood learning goals. The plan includes both formative and summative measures for ongoing and outcome-based assessment. A significant purpose of the assessment plan is to ensure that progress monitoring is part of the instructional program so teachers/ caregivers monitor children's learning and adjust instruction when needed. According to the National Association for the Education for Young Children's guidance for accreditation (NAEYC; 2010), the assessment plan* is expected to contain the following principles and/or information:

- Assessment information is used to support children's learning and is collected through a variety of methods, including observations, checklists, rating scales, and individually administered tests (formal assessments).
- A description of the purpose, procedures, and use of the results.
- An understanding that there are multiple purposes, such as, identifying children's interests and needs, progress monitoring, informing the curriculum, diagnosing the need for more in-depth assessments, and communicating with families.
- Methods that are sensitive to culture, home language, and developmental disabilities.
- Multi-domain assessments and additional methods to target specific language and literacy skills.

* See Appendix A for a sample child assessment plan based on the NAEYC criteria.

- Use of summative measures (i.e., norm-referenced or formal instruments) to gauge program outcomes. However, these summative measures are combined with informal, naturalistic methods.
- Methods for effectively communicating with families.

Role of the Teacher/Caregiver

The assessment plan must be comprehensive and aligned to the curriculum. The concepts and skills for language development and emergent literacy found in the *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5* (IDOE, 2006) will assist assessment planners as they develop learning goals, lesson plans, and instructional activities. The identified learning goals will guide teachers/caregivers as they determine what to assess and where to focus instructional time so children are prepared for kindergarten and beyond. The teacher/caregiver observes and records children as they are engaged in learning activities and language interactions, using observation templates and checklists. Samples of children's work are gathered in individual portfolios to provide evidence of progress throughout the school year. See the ISTAR-KR Handbook for examples (IDOE, 2010).

Gathering assessment information is only the first step toward determining if developmental milestones and/or children's learning goals are met. Once the data are collected it is necessary to analyze and interpret the results. Typically, standardized instruments require a person with adequate training to administer the assessment and specialized knowledge to **analyze**, interpret, and report the results. Informal assessments, however, can be analyzed and interpreted by the teacher/caregiver because the data collection tools are designed to match curriculum goals and the learning goals.



Key term:

Analyze: to examine data systematically by separating the findings into parts and studying how the parts relate.

The assessment results also help the teachers/caregivers to reflect upon their instruction as it relates to children's learning. If the assessment demonstrates that children are learning, then they should move on to new material. On the other hand, if

the assessments indicate that children are not learning the expected content, then they must reconsider what is being taught and the method of instruction (Enz & Morrow, 2009). The teachers/caregivers may also notice that only particular children are struggling with the content and based on this knowledge, they should differentiate the instruction to meet individual development and skill levels. The progress monitoring cycle repeats itself as teachers/caregivers continually examine and reflect upon the assessment results, and then determine if changes need to be made to the curriculum and/or instruction to ensure children are learning the foundational skills of language and literacy. By engaging in differentiated instruction, teachers/caregivers use assessment information proactively to help design and implement the best learning opportunities for children.

Role of the Center Director or School Principal

Curriculum, assessment, and instruction must be aligned in order to establish an effective assessment system that informs practice and meets the learning needs of all children. Effective center and school leaders build a shared vision that addresses the purposes for assessment and how it should be implemented. A number of elements are important when designing and implementing an efficient assessment system (Jones, 2003). First, the individual learning goals need to be clearly defined and understood by the leaders, teachers/caregivers, paraprofessionals, and families. If the goals are not understood, then unnecessary assessment of children often occurs. Second, leadership must design the daily schedule to provide teachers/caregivers adequate time to collect and interpret the data, as well as to reflect and adapt curriculum so instruction meets children's learning needs. Third, appropriate professional development that ensures an understanding of valid data collection and the application of the findings to instructional practice is crucial.

Important Point



Four Essential Questions

1. ***Why*** are we assessing?
2. ***What*** are we assessing?
3. ***Who*** are we assessing?
4. ***How*** are we assessing?

(Snow & Oh, 2011)

Professional development should be differentiated to meet the individual learning needs of the staff. Teachers/caregivers need both breadth and depth of assessment

knowledge so they are able to implement a systematic assessment plan and answer the questions: *Why? What? Who?* and *How?* (Snow & Van Hemel, 2008; Snow & Oh, 2011).

Role of Families

To understand children's development and the learning progress, families, teachers/caregivers, and leadership need to work together as a team. Because every child and every family is unique, the assessment of infants', toddlers', or preschoolers' should be planned with children and families in mind. Although they want to be involved, many families lack an understanding of the processes of assessment and what is expected and appropriate.

Generally, families need an explanation of the assessment process, an understanding of the assessment tool, an explanation of the results, and resources so that they continue to be involved. Families are also crucial to the data collection process because they are data informants, providing teachers/caregivers with information about their child's behaviors and activities at home, such as developmental milestones and preferred learning styles. By engaging families in the assessment process, a number of positive outcomes will occur. Families will benefit from partnering with teachers/caregivers by:

- Sharpening their own observation skills,
- Recognizing new abilities in their child, and
- Learning the stages of appropriate development.

Early Childhood Assessment Instruments

The *Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Report for Kindergarten Readiness* (ISTAR-KR; www.doe.in.gov/assessment) is a tool available without cost to all public and private early childhood providers to assess children's overall development. One section, English/Language Arts, focuses on children's language and literacy development. The ISTAR-KR Handbook (Indiana DOE, 2010) provides valuable information to the teacher about how to gather data. In particular, three

chapters provide information that are applicable to any type of formative assessment: (1) Ongoing Assessment: Observation and Documentation, (2) Using ISTAR-KR Data to Improve Planning and Expected Outcomes, and (3) Adjusting the Curriculum.

In brief, the ISTAR-KR is a rating tool that is comprised of 30 behaviors that represent developmental skills of children ranging from 4 months to 6 years of age. In particular, the two areas of Mathematics and English/Language Arts are aligned with the Kindergarten Common Core State Standards, which serve as Indiana's Academic Standards. Scores on these two scales represent a child's skill/age level "on the assessment data compared to typically developing same-aged peers" (p. 10). The behavior competencies on the ISTAR-KR were derived from Indiana's Early Learning Standards, the *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Children, Birth to Age 5* (2006). The ISTAR-KR is completed when a child enters a program, annually at the child's birthday, and when the child exits the program. This schedule is the minimum expected by the State of Indiana, but ongoing progress monitoring is critical for informing instruction to meet the needs of all children.

The chapter, Ongoing Assessments: Observations and Documentation, in the ISTAR-KR Handbook (IDOE, 2010) outlines step-by-step procedures for engaging in child observations from determining what to observe, how to collect the information, and what to do with the information. Once the data are collected, teachers/caregivers complete matrices to help interpret the data. For additional and more detailed information, teachers/caregivers can use the *ISTAR-KR Progress Monitoring Instrument* with a child. The *Progress Monitoring Instrument* is a Detailed/Second Level assessment "that monitors a child's progress on performance indicators through incremental descriptive behavior examples of the next performance expectation of a child's learning" (pp. 20-21). The instrument contains rubric criteria that rates children's behavior within a range: introduced, emerging, developing, ongoing, demonstrated, and applied.

There are numerous commercial early childhood assessment instruments available. Snow and Oh (2011) provide a brief review of a number of instruments that assess language and literacy skills and an explanation of the scores generated for those skills.

TABLE 3: Assessment Instruments and Measurements of Language and Literacy

Domain	Language/Literacy Domain(s)	
Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum	Head Start Outcomes Framework	
Child Observation Record (for both infants and toddlers and preschoolers)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phonological Awareness 2. Concepts about Print 3. Alphabetic Principle 4. Comprehension 	
Developmental Assessment of Young Children (birth to 6 years)	Communication subscale: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receptive and expressive vocabulary 2. Verbal and nonverbal expressions 	
ECHO Early Childhood Observation System (Pre-K to grade 2)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Letter knowledge/phonics 2. Oral language and vocabulary 3. Comprehension 4. Emergent writing/writing 5. Print awareness/concepts of print 	
The Early Learning Accomplishment Profile (birth to 3) and The Learning Accomplishment Profile-3 (LAP-3) (preschool)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language/pre-literacy (ELAP) 2. Language/prewriting (LAP-3) 	
Galileo Pre-K	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listening and understanding 2. Speaking and communicating 3. Phonological awareness 4. Book knowledge and appreciation 5. Print awareness and concepts 6. Early reading and writing 7. Alphabet knowledge 	
The Ounce Scale (birth to 3) and the Work Sampling System (pre-K to grade 6)	(The Ounce Scale) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding 2. Communicating 	(Work Sampling System) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listening 2. Speaking 3. Reading 4. Writing

Table 3

Classroom Literacy Environment

The classroom for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers needs to be a nurturing environment. The physical and emotional surroundings provide the setting for teachers/caregivers to engage in authentic assessments as children are engaged in play and learning activities. Teacher/caregivers often focus their attention on lesson planning not realizing that the physical arrangement of the classroom plays an equal part in contributing to how children learn language and literacy (Enz & Morrow, 2009). Research indicates that children who attend high-quality programs not only engage in more complex activities with peers and materials, but also score higher on standardized measures of school readiness (Pianta, 2004).

Language and literacy rich classrooms typically have word walls, morning meeting areas with functional print (calendars, weather chart, helper chart, etc.), and classroom labels, and instructional charts (e.g., directions, songs, poetry). Furthermore, each of the activity centers is stocked with engaging materials that enhance opportunities for children to learn through play and dialogue about what they are doing. A substantial quantity and variety of books and other print materials are available for children's use. Games provide practice in literacy skills such as word concentration, lotto, and puzzles; computer programs involve children in creating their own stories and activities. Classrooms with materials that are engaging to children provide opportunities for observing children's play, interactions, and learning, providing fertile ground for authentic data collection.

To ensure that the classroom environment supports language and literacy development, an assessment of the physical environment is important. Two such instruments are the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation* (ELLCO; Smith & Dickinson, 2002) and the *Classroom Literacy Environment Profile* (CLEP; Wolfersberger, Reutzel, Sudweeks, & Fawson, 2004). Each of these tools examines the "literacy richness" of the classroom. For an instrument that examines the global or overall quality of the environment, the *Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale* (ITERS; Harms, T., Cryer, D., & Clifford, R. M., 1990) or the *Early Childhood*

Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998) are often used.

The ELLCO measures the quality of language and literacy experiences in classrooms by examining literacy practices and environmental supports. The ELLCO identifies instructional practices and supports that encourage children's early literacy and language development from preschool to elementary school (classrooms that serve 3-year olds to 8-year olds). The ELLCO is comprised of three interdependent observation components: (1) *Literacy Environment Checklist*, (2) *Classroom Observations and Teacher Interview*, and (3) *Literacy Activity Rating Scale*. The ELLCO is a comprehensive tool that examines dimensions of classroom environments related to student achievement in literacy.

The CLEP is another instrument that examines the "literacy richness" of the classroom. This tool provides an assessment of the quantity and organization of print materials and literacy materials available in the classroom, as well as spatial organization, and literacy interactions using print materials. The findings help refine and design classrooms to enhance literacy learning. See Table 4 (page 20) for a list of the key literacy elements measured with the ELLCO and the CLEP.

Another critical aspect of the classroom environment is the quality of interactions children have with their teachers/caregivers. Examples of classrooms with high-quality interactions include teachers who promote children's learning through scaffolding and support, establish episodes of joint attention with children, and offer appropriate questioning and feedback (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004). The *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS), developed by La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman (2004), examines the emotional and instructional climate of the classroom. This instrument has nine subscales to assess classroom quality in terms of emotional and instructional climate and quality of teacher-child interactions, including classroom management and instructional supports for learning. Because materials can be variable across early childhood programs, this instrument is unique because it examines the use and implementation of curriculum and materials. The CLASS examines what teachers do with the materials as opposed to what is available in the physical environment.

TABLE 4: *Environmental Rating Scales and Key Literacy Elements*

Instrument	Key Literacy Elements
<i>Early Language and Learning Classroom Observation (ELLCO)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom structure • Curriculum • Language environment • Books and book reading opportunities • Print and early writing supports
<i>Classroom Literacy Environment Profile (CLEP)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy related tools • Variety of text materials • Classroom organization • Child literacy product displays • Reference materials available • Forms of written communication • Writing utensils, writing surfaces • Technology

Table 4

Language and Literacy Assessments

Although early childhood providers may use an assessment system that measures global language and literacy skills or the literacy environment, some teachers/caregivers may be interested in pursuing more precise measures that target particular areas of children's language and literacy development. Many of these instruments fall within the more formal, standardized realm of assessment tools. To diagnose if a child is lacking a particular language and literacy skill, it is often necessary to move away from informal assessments, such as observational scales and checklists. Table 5 lists a number of formal or standardized instruments identified for assessing targeted skill areas of language and literacy (Enz & Morrow, 2009).

TABLE 5: *Language and Literacy Assessment Tools*

Domain:	Indicator:	Standardized Assessment Tools
Oral Language Development	Receptive & Expressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool Language Scale 4 (PLS-4) • Test of Language Development (TOLD) • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test -4 (PPVT-4) • Expressive Vocabulary Test, 2nd Ed. (EVT-2) • Oral Written Language Skills (OWLS)
Emergent Literacy Skills	Phonological Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test of Phonological Awareness • Auditory Analysis Test • Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS Pre-K)
	Print Knowledge and Concepts of Print	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts about Print • Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA) • Test of Early Reading Ability, 3rd Ed. (TERA-3) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS Pre-K)
	Alphabet Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA) • Test of Early Reading Ability, 3rd Ed. (TERA-3) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS Pre-K)
	Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boehm Test of Basic Concepts, Preschool 3rd Ed. • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – 4 (PPVT-4) • Expressive Vocabulary Test, 2nd Ed. (EVT-2)
	Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS Pre-K)

Table 5

English Learners and Assessment

Early childhood programs are serving young children who are increasingly diverse in cultural background and language (Snow & Van Hemel, 2008).

Unfortunately, there has not been a corresponding development of appropriate assessment instruments for English Learners. The predominant method is to assess all children in English, but by doing this, the teacher/caregiver ignores children's existing skills and abilities in their home language. Teachers/caregivers may also have difficulty knowing how to distinguish between language differences and language disorders since many of the characteristics of second language acquisition can easily be mistaken for language disorders. Finally, unresolved issues exist with language assessments that are currently in use (Espinoza & Lopez, 2007), including:

- Many of the current instruments are direct translations of English versions, which may compromise the validity of the instrument.
- The order in which the instrument items are organized may vary in difficulty from language to language.
- Words that are translated from English to Spanish, for example, may have different levels of exposure for young children.
- The normative samples may not include a representative number of minorities.

Ideally, a program should assess a child in both the home language and English, but this may not always be feasible if the teacher/caregiver does not speak or understand the home language. In light of this, high quality professional development can assist the teacher/caregiver to understand the variability of how children learn a second language and how to appropriately assess English Learners.

Professional Development

Teachers/caregivers and center directors/principals need an in-depth understanding of how a comprehensive assessment system contributes to a high-quality learning environment. Teachers/caregivers need to understand what role

assessment plays in planning learning activities for young children, as well as the protocols and procedures for administering the required assessments. Professional development focusing on assessment may include a number of the topics (See Table 6 below for a list of topics.)

TABLE 6: <i>Focus Areas for Professional Development: Assessment</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child development as it relates to appropriate assessment practices 2. Elements of a high quality literacy environment 3. Knowledge of the <i>Indiana Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children birth to age 5</i>, focusing on language and literacy 4. Formative and summative assessment 5. Appropriate assessment measures 6. Appropriate use of informal and formal assessments 7. Analysis and application of data to guide curriculum and instructional decisions 8. How to assess English Learner children 9. Effective and appropriate communication with families about all aspects of assessment (purpose, administration, interpretation, implications, activities for the home, etc.)
Table 6


Although professional development provided to all teachers/caregiver may be useful in developing a knowledge base on assessment practices and strategies,

research indicates that teachers/caregivers who receive additional ongoing support and guidance through individualized coaching are more likely to learn and implement new instructional and assessment practices (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Differentiated professional development enables teachers/caregivers to deepen their understanding of the assessment process and to use data to plan appropriate instruction. Research indicates that following-up on professional development sessions with on-going, differentiated coaching is more effective in improving instructional practice than coursework or isolated one-day professional development sessions alone (Neuman & Wright, 2010). (See the chapter on Professional Development for additional information).

Summary

Early childhood assessment needs to be an integral part of all early learning classrooms. In particular, a focus on language and literacy development is necessary to ascertain if children are achieving the critical skills needed for later reading and school success. Early childhood classrooms need to combine formative and summative assessment methods and progress monitoring to obtain a complete picture of a child's development. Accurate data collection, meaningful professional development activities, supportive leadership, and a comprehensive assessment plan are essential for achieving success.

Appendix A
Sample Child Assessment Plan

	Criteria	Evidence
	<p>A variety of methods are used to collect assessment information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Observations <input type="checkbox"/> Checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Rating scales <input type="checkbox"/> Video/audio tapes <input type="checkbox"/> Individually administered tests 	
	<p>A written plan exists describing the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Purpose of assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Procedures (i.e., timeline, conditions for assessment) <input type="checkbox"/> Use of assessment results <input type="checkbox"/> Methods for involving and communicating with families 	
	<p>Written plan includes multiple purposes of assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Progress Monitoring <input type="checkbox"/> Improving the curriculum and adapting teaching methods and environment <input type="checkbox"/> Program evaluation and improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Diagnosing the need for more in-depth assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying children's interests and needs 	
	<p>Assessment methods are sensitive to culture, home language, and developmental disabilities</p>	
	<p>Assessments gather information in all areas of children's development and learning, including cognitive, language and literacy, social-emotional, health, approaches to learning, and physical development.</p>	
	<p>Summative measures are used to gauge program outcomes and to make improvements.</p>	
	<p>Effective methods of communicating with families about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Gathering input about the child's development, behavior, and home language/ literacy use <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and implementing classroom assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing and discussing classroom assessment results <input type="checkbox"/> Suggesting at home activities to support growth in language and literacy 	

(Adapted from the *Guidance to the NAEYC Accreditation Criteria, 2010*)